

PACIFIC FLYWAY CENTER

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PROJECT OVERVIEW: The applicant, Claude Grillo of the Pacific Flyway Fund, a non-profit organization, is proposing to develop, restore and enhance the site as an open space land preserve and wildlife habitat conservation area, with an interpretive nature and educational facility. The purpose of this project, the Pacific Flyway Center, is to celebrate and educate the public about the environmental and societal importance of the conservation of migratory birds within the Pacific Flyway. The project is envisioned to serve up to 250,000 annual visitors at build out with up to 150 full and part time employees.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service estimates there are 47.7 million “birders” within the United States. Those “birders” will now be able to access a previously marginal area of the Marsh for bird watching activities. Restoring and enhancing the Marsh will allow visitors to experience first-hand the natural wonders occurring everyday within the Marsh. The trail network has been designed to maximize its use as passive nature-oriented recreation, while minimizing impacts on the Marsh. The “Walk in the Marsh” will provide public access to the Marsh in a location that was previously inaccessible. The Project will expose visitors to ecological relationships between water, marsh vegetation, and migratory birds and other species that depend on the Marsh. It will allow the local community and visitors from all over the world to observe and interact with wetlands and wildlife in their natural habitat, and will educate visitors about habitat restoration and the conservation of wetlands and wildlife.

LOCATION: The project site, comprised of four parcels totaling approximately 560 acres, is located within the southwest portion of the City of Fairfield’s Planning Area. The site is located east of Interstate 680, south of the Gold Hill Road over crossing, adjacent to Ramsey Road. Half of the site, consisting of the two easternmost parcels (APNs: 0046-050-310, 0046-100-270), is currently owned and managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife as part of the Grizzly Island Wildlife Area. The other half, consisting of the two westernmost parcels (APNs: 0046-050-300 & 0046-100-260), is owned by the project applicants.

SURROUNDING LAND USES AND SETTING: Interstate 680 runs to the west of the Project. West of Interstate 680, there are existing single family subdivisions within the limits of the City of Fairfield. The areas to the east, south and north of the Project site are comprised of portions of the Suisun Marsh. Suisun Marsh is the largest contiguous brackish wetland in the western United States, comprising nearly 10% of the remaining wetlands in the State of California. The marsh land is part of the San Francisco Bay-Delta tidal estuary. The Suisun Marsh provides critically important resting and feeding grounds for hundreds of thousands of birds migrating within the Pacific Flyway twice each year during their north south migrations.

SITE CHARACTERISTICS: The approximately 560 acres within the site are comprised of both secondary management area and primary management area habitats as defined

by the Suisun Marsh Preservation Act adopted in 1974 and the Suisun Marsh Protection Plan adopted in 1977. Elevations range from 0-24' above mean-sea level. The site is known as the Garibaldi Unit of the State of California Grizzly Island Wildlife Area and was previously used by the Garibaldi family as a working cattle ranch, private waterfowl refuge and for hunting and fishing. Various out-buildings, aircraft landing strip, and airport hangar were developed on the property. The area consists primarily of uplands along its westerly edge and is largely managed wetlands to the east. As part of the Grizzly Island Wildlife Area, the site has been managed as habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife and used for various recreational activities, including nature viewing, hiking, fishing and hunting. Agriculture, levee construction and development and management of waterfowl habitat have modified the natural habitats of the Project site.

Two of the four parcels (APNs: 0046-050-300 & 0046-100-260), totaling approximately 280 acres of the site, have been transferred from the State of California to the Pacific Flyway Fund via a land exchange. Future land exchanges are scheduled to occur for the remaining 280 acres in 2018. The first exchange, consists of approximately 80 acres of Secondary Management uplands and approximately 200 acres of Primary Management marshland, and are proposed for annexation into the City of Fairfield. The annexation is necessary order to obtain the provision of City services, such as sewer and water, to serve the project's utility needs. The remaining 280 acres, once exchanged, will not be annexed into the City but remain within the County.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Of the approximately 280 acres intended for annexation into the City of Fairfield, approximately 8.3 acres would be developed with impervious surfaces, encompassing the visitor education and interpretive center, wildlife theater, gift shop and food service facilities, maintenance area, and driveways and parking areas. The total square footage of the proposed buildings is approximately 125,000 square feet. The buildings will be constructed within the upland grasslands portion of the site, adjacent to Interstate 680.

Approximately 124 acres of the site would be enhanced and restored as an outdoor wildlife habitat viewing area, to be known as the "Walk in the Marsh". Work planned for this area will consist of the creation, restoration and enhancement of ponds, wetlands, wildlife viewing overlooks, raised boardwalk pathways, pervious pathways, and water conveyance system. Within the "Walk in the Marsh" area, improvements would include creation, restoration and enhancement of approximately 24 acres of new ponds and wetlands for wildlife. This would include restoring and habitat enhancement to approximately 6.5 acres of existing wetlands and creation of approximately 17.5 acres of new wetlands by converting upland areas into new wetlands. These enhancements are anticipated to be accomplished under a US Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) Nationwide 27 permit and Suisun Resource Conservation District permits. Additionally, approximately 4,500 sq. ft. of raised boardwalks for the "Walk in the Marsh" will be constructed within and adjacent to the existing and created wetlands, with no ACOE permit necessary for this work. Restoration and enhancement work will include, among other activities, grading, weeding, revegetation, and salinity control. Within the upland grasslands, weeds will be removed and the area will be revegetated with native species

typical of upland grassland habitats. The Project will enhance the value of the upland grasslands as habitat for Marsh-related wildlife where possible by planting and encouraging the growth of native plant species, including those that will provide valuable food and cover for wildlife.

The newly created, restored and enhanced wetlands would receive water from four potential sources, including, natural rain water, slough water which is currently being utilized in the existing managed wetlands, well-water from existing on-site wells, and raw water received from the City of Fairfield. These waters would be fed into a holding pond at the southwest corner of the visitor building area adjacent to Ramsey Road, and then transferred into the wetlands via gravity flows using a weir system. A new pump and intake located adjacent to the northerly parking lot would then re-cycle and re-circulate the water back to the holding pond, which would then again gravity flow back to the wetlands.

PROJECT PHASING: The education and interpretive center building will consist of approximately 125,000 sq. ft. of area, comprised of three buildings. Construction is anticipated to occur in three phases. It is anticipated that Phase 1 will include construction of a 28,000 sq. ft. building, to be initially used as the Education Center containing exhibits and educational programs and a bus stop to accommodate buses of school children coming to view and learn. Phase 1 will also include a 137 space parking lot and site utilities, as well as the initial site grading for the “Walk in the Marsh”.

Phase 2 will consist the construction of an additional 15,000 sq. ft. “Wonders of Wildlife” theater building area, and an additional 200 parking spaces. Phase 3 of construction will add an additional 41,200 sq. ft. of building area, for a project total of approximately 125,000 sq. ft. of building area and a total of 337 parking spaces and expanded bus drop off area. All of the impervious surface development will occur in areas that are delineated as uplands, and will have no impacts to existing wetlands.

The last of the wetlands creation, restoration, and enhancements, will be completed by the final building construction phase. This wetland work is envisioned to occur in conjunction with the Suisun Resource Conservation District under its Army Corps of Engineers General Permit and under Nationwide Permit 27 guidelines. Enhancement work within the Primary Areas of the Marsh will be subject to BCDC approvals and will commence upon obtaining the necessary permits.

PROJECT SPONSORS:

- Pacific Flyway Foundation
- Ducks Unlimited
- Audubon Society
- California Waterfowl Association
- University of California, Davis